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Subject: Riverfront Times - Bridgeton Landfill: "Dirty Bomb"Radioactive Hazards or Irresponsible Activist Speculation?

Bridgeton Landfill: "Dirty Bomb" Radioactive Hazards or Irresponsible Activist Speculation?

http://blogs.riverfronttimes.com/dailyrft/2013/03/bridgeton_landfill_radioactive_waste_environment.php?page=3

Residents of Bridgeton, Missouri should be worried about serious potential health hazards tied to an [increasingly smelly landfill](#). So says a coalition of environmental activists who are spreading the word about a possible "dirty bomb" or chemical threat related to radioactivity on the site.

Officials behind the landfill, however, say that residents have something else they should be *more* worried about: activists spreading lies.

The fight around the Bridgeton Landfill, which has gotten a lot of [attention for its awful stink](#), came to a head on Friday when environmental advocates met with officials to present their concerns about potential hazards. And in response, the company that operates the landfill sent out multiple press releases with some pretty harshly worded rebuttals -- and direct attacks on those speaking out.

"They are portraying it as, 'Everything is going to be fine,'" Ed Smith, safe energy director for the Missouri Coalition for the Environment tells Daily *RFT*. "But we need a better understanding of what the heck is going on."

The business in question is Republic Services, the parent company of Bridgeton Landfill LLC, which operates the site that has been in the news for several months due to the [putrid smells](#) that are so bad some residents have said they can't escape the stench even inside their homes. The company is based out of Arizona.

But environmental groups say that it's much more than just a bad smell that residents should be worried about. Fire and nuclear weapons wastes at the West Lake Landfill, which sits right next to the smelly Bridgeton landfill, could prove to be a very dangerous combination, they say. Republic Services is one of several entities responsible for the West Lake Landfill.

There is heat being generated at the Bridgeton landfill, which officials admit, but the activists, with support from expert testimony, argue that this heat and the nearby radioactivity could together become very hazardous.

The Coalition for the Environment says in its news release:

Radioactive wastes dumped at the West Lake Landfill in 1973 sit in the Missouri River floodplain with no protective barriers between the wastes and the groundwater. The site is located 8 river miles upstream from where drinking water is pulled for more than 300,000 North St. Louis County residents.

"We all have members that live and work and play around this landfill," says Smith. "Republic's duty is to out-of-town investors."

The coalition, alongside Missouri Jobs with Justice and Teamsters Union, is urging elected officials to recognize the potential risks at this site and encourage government agencies to hire independent experts to analyze air quality and other conditions at the site.

Republic Services, the groups argue, needs a concrete plan to stop the landfill fire and needs to ensure that the area is secure from chemical and radioactive exposures. These activists -- their full demands on view below -- are also calling for increased transparency and "taxpayer protection" so that Republic Services would pay for all costs related to testing and remediation.

What does the company have to say about these accusations and demands?

Republic Services says that the Environmental Protection Agency has determined that the heat being generated from the Bridgeton Landfill doesn't affect or pose a risk to the West Lake Landfill.

Tim Trost, the area president for Republic Services, sent out this first statement about activists' claims:

We are concerned by the actions of those who are trying to link the odor and the material decomposing at Bridgeton Landfill with the low level radioactive material at West Lake Landfill. They are purposely and irresponsibly scaring residents with their speculation. The EPA now needs to release its information and end this speculation once and for all.

Both the activists and Republic Services are highlighting the fact that the EPA recently conducted a flyover of the site -- with the company urging those results to be sent out as soon as possible to clear up confusion.

An EPA official tells Daily *RFT* that there was some sort of testing but that these results aren't available yet -- and adds that EPA has no further comment on the dispute (in part, because the agency was not even aware that there was an event on Friday organized by the activist groups related to this stie).

After the first press release criticizing groups for irresponsible speculation, Republic Services sent out a more harsh rebuttal that points out that one of the groups' "experts" is not a scientist, but rather an economist.

Trost, in the second news release, offers this dramatic quote:

It is often said that the first casualty of war is the truth. Bridgeton residents and community leaders must wonder what war they have been dragged in to when Peter Anderson, the Executive Director of the Center for a Competitive Waste Industry, claimed earlier today that conditions at Bridgeton Landfill could lead to a 'dirty bomb.'...

It's clear that these so-called experts aren't thinking about the people who live and work near this landfill when they make these outrageous claims. The people in this part of the county deserve the truth not this type of fear-mongering.

Anderson was one of the speakers; his arguments are outlined in the full news release from the coalition on view below.

Anne Marie Moy, a local spokeswoman for Republic Services, tells Daily *RFT*, "We are encouraging the EPA to release information as soon as possible so that we can stop the spread of misinformation and speculation that's causing a lot of unrest among the residents and people that work in the area."

But Smith says it is the company that is spreading lies: "Republic says that everything is fine and dandy. That is premature at best and seems to be [intentional] misinformation...at worst."

Here's Republic's first press release.

BRIDGETON LANDFILL CALLS ON EPA TO RELEASE FINDINGS ON WEST LAKE LANDFILL Speculation May Be Good for Activist Groups But Bad For Residents and Landfill Employees

(Bridgeton, Missouri): Tim Trost, the Area President for Republic Services, the parent company of Bridgeton Landfill LLC, issued the following statement regarding this morning's activists meeting.

"On behalf of the residents, employees and communities in and around the Bridgeton Landfill, we are calling on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to release its findings as soon as possible regarding radiation at the West Lake Landfill.

The EPA has determined that the heat being generated from the Bridgeton Landfill does not affect or pose a risk to the West Lake Landfill.

That's why we are concerned by the actions of those who are trying to link the odor and the material decomposing at Bridgeton Landfill with the low level radioactive material at West Lake Landfill. They are purposely and irresponsibly scaring residents with their speculation. The EPA now needs to release its information and end this speculation once and for all."

And the company's second one.

"EXPERT" WHO CLAIMED DIRTY BOMB POTENTIAL AT BRIDGETON LANDFILL IS NOT A SCIENTIST--HE'S AN ECONOMIST

Trost: "He's an expert all right - an expert at scaring people while ignoring the facts"

(Bridgeton, Missouri): Tim Trost, the Area President for Republic Services, the parent company of Bridgeton Landfill LLC, issued a statement denouncing Peter Anderson's accusation that conditions at Bridgeton Landfill could create a "dirty bomb" scenario for nearby employees and residents.

"It is often said that the first casualty of war is the truth. Bridgeton residents and community leaders must wonder what war they have been dragged in to when Peter Anderson, the Executive Director of the Center for a Competitive Waste Industry, claimed earlier today that conditions at Bridgeton Landfill could lead to a 'dirty bomb.'

Peter Anderson is an economist by training. He leads a non-profit organization that is supported by those with a financial interest opposed to Republic Services. Anderson owes Bridgeton residents an apology for trying to scare them with one false statement after another."

The facts about Bridgeton Landfill:

- Deep inside the landfill, a heat-producing reaction is causing the trash around it to decompose at an accelerated rate. Gas and liquids are a natural byproduct of this decomposition. The acceleration is causing more of both to be produced. It is important to remember that for a fire to occur, there needs to be oxygen and at this depth in the landfill, no oxygen is present.
- There is absolutely no evidence or proof of any kind that jet fuel is buried at the Bridgeton Landfill.
- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has determined that the heat being generated from the Bridgeton Landfill does not affect or pose a risk to the West Lake Landfill.

Added Trost, "When it comes to trusting someone about what is going on the Bridgeton and West Lake landfills, who would you believe ... the experts at the EPA or an economist with a financial interest?"

Concluded Trost, "It's clear that these so-called experts aren't thinking about the people who live and work near this landfill when they make these outrageous claims. The people in this part of the county deserve the truth not this type of fear-mongering."